



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON

October 2005

A MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY

Women have served valiantly in defense of America since our Nation's struggle for independence. Today, women are the fastest growing segment of our Nation's veteran population. Nearly 1.7 million of our fellow citizens—women we know as friends, neighbors, relatives, and colleagues—carry the honored title of veteran.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has long recognized the need to focus on the concerns of veterans at large and on issues unique to women in particular. VA's Veterans Health Administration is now focused on disease prevention, early detection, health promotion, and ease of access for women.

VA provides a full continuum of health care services to eligible women veterans including gender-specific care. To meet the specific needs of women veterans, there are eight Women Veterans Comprehensive Health Centers in Minnesota, Florida, Northern and Southern California, North Carolina, Illinois, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania. VA has also designated six Clinical Programs of Excellence in Women's Health at medical centers in Louisiana, Florida, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Texas. For more information, you can link to them on the Center for Women Veterans Web site at <http://www.va.gov/womenvet>.

In addition to general medical and gynecological care, VA offers special services for veterans who have suffered sexual trauma while serving in the military. Our dedicated, compassionate professionals provide confidential counseling and treatment for the residual effects of sexual trauma. Treatment and counseling are available even if the victim did not report the incident while serving on active duty.

VA's Veterans Benefits Administration offers benefits programs for disability compensation and pension, vocational rehabilitation and employment, education and training, home loan guaranties, and life insurance. Each VA medical center has a Women Veterans Program Manager, and each VA regional office has a Women Veterans Coordinator to provide information on and assistance with benefits and services. VA's National Cemetery Administration honors veterans, including women veterans and their spouses, with a final resting place and lasting memorials that commemorate their service to our Nation.

VA's Center for Women Veterans was established in 1994. Its mission is to ensure that women veterans receive benefits and services on par with male veterans, encounter no discrimination in their attempt to access these services, and are treated with respect and dignity by VA service providers. The Center Director acts as my primary advisor on all matters related to programs, issues, and initiatives for and affecting women veterans.

As the Nation's advocate for all who have borne the battle, VA is committed to ensuring that America's daughters receive the highest quality health care, benefits, and programs. It is our privilege and honor to serve them.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. James Nicholson", is written over a horizontal line.

R. James Nicholson